



X.220.c.





# THE ACADEMY.

*A WEEKLY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE,  
AND ART.*

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JANUARY — JUNE.

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$$d \in \mathbb{N} \quad \text{and} \quad \varepsilon \in \mathbb{R}^N \text{ with } (0, H_{\varepsilon}) \in H_{\varepsilon}^{\perp}.$$
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## LITERATURE.

*The Works of Edgar Allan Poe.* Edited by John H. Ingram. Vols. I. and II., containing the Collected Tales. (London and Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1874.)

WITH just so much of the author's works before us, it would be too soon to speak definitively of his character, either as a man or a writer; and hence, although Mr. Ingram's memoir is prefixed, duly enough, to the first volume, I do not think it falls to be considered here in any detail. Mr. Ingram has done his best to clear Poe's name from the calumnies of Rufus Griswold (a gentleman, grim by name, who makes so repulsive a figure in literary history, that he might well have been coined in the morbid fancy of his victim); but when all is said, it is not in the power of man to make Poe altogether sympathetic. I cannot find it in my heart to like either his portrait or his character; and though it is possible that we see him more or less refracted through the strange medium of his works, yet I do fancy that we can detect, alike in these, in his portrait, and in the facts of his life as now most favourably told, a certain jarring note, a taint of something that we do not care to dwell upon or find a name for.

The tales themselves are all before us in these two volumes; and though Mr. Ingram does not tell us whether they are there printed in chronological order, I fancy we shall not be mistaken in regarding some of the last stories in the second volume, as being also among the last he wrote. There is no trace, in these, of the brilliant and often solid workmanship of his better moments. The stories are ill-conceived and written carelessly. There is much laughter; but it is a very ghastly sort of laughter at best—the laughter of those, in his own words, “who laugh, but smile no more.” He seems to have lost respect for himself, for his art, and for his audience. When he dealt before with horrible images, he dealt with them for some definite enough creative purpose, and with a certain measure and gravity suitable to the occasion; but he scatters them abroad in these last tales with an indescribable and sickening levity, with something of the ghoul or the furious lunatic that surpasses what one had imagined to oneself of Hell. There is a duty to the living more important than any charity to the dead; and it would be criminal in the reviewer to spare one harsh word in the expression of his own loathing and horror,

lest, by its absence, another victim should be permitted to soil himself with the perusal of the infamous “King Pest.” He who could write “King Pest” had ceased to be a human being. For his own sake, and out of an infinite compassion for so lost a spirit, one is glad to think of him as dead. But if it is pity that we feel towards Poe, it is certainly not pity that inspires us as we think of Baudelaire, who could sit down in cold blood, and dress out in suitable French this pointless farrago of horrors. There is a phase of contempt that, if indulged, transcends itself and becomes a phase of passionate self-satisfaction; so for the weal of our own spirits, it is better to think no more of Baudelaire or “King Pest.”

It is not the fashion of Poe's earlier tales to be pointless, however it may be with these sorry ones of the end. Pointlessness is, indeed, the very last charge that could be brought reasonably against them. He has the true story-teller's instinct. He knows the little nothings that make stories, or mar them. He knows how to enhance the significance of any situation, and give colour and life with seemingly irrelevant particulars. Thus, the whole spirit of “The Cask of Amontillado” depends on Fortunato's carnival costume of cap and bells and motley. When Poe had once hit upon this device of dressing the victim grotesquely, he had found the key of the story; and so he sends him with eleven steps along the catacombs of the Montresors, and the last sound we hear out of the walled-up recess is the jingling of the bells upon his cap. Admirable, also, is the use he makes of the striking clock at Prince Prospero's feast, in “The Mask of the Red Death.” Each time the clock struck (the reader will remember), it struck so loudly that the music and the dancing must cease perforce until it had made an end; as the hours ran on towards midnight, these pauses grew naturally longer; the maskers had the more time to think and look at one another, and their thoughts were none the more pleasant. Thus, as each hour struck, there went a jar about the assemblage; until, as the reader will remember, the end comes suddenly. Now, this is quite legitimate; no one need be ashamed of being frightened or excited by such means; the rules of the game have been respected; only, by the true instinct of the story-teller he has told his story to the best advantage, and got full value for his imaginations. This is not so always, however; for sometimes he will take a high note falsetto; sometimes, by a sort of conjuring trick, get more out of his story than he has been able to put into it; and, while the whole garrison is really parading past us on the esplanade, continue to terrify us from the battlements with sham cannon and many fierce-looking shakos upon broom-sticks. For example, in “The Pit and the Pendulum,” after having exhausted his bedevilled imagination in the conception of the pendulum and the red-hot collapsing walls, he finds he can figure forth nothing more horrible for the pit; and yet the pit was to be the crowning horror. This is how he effects his purpose (vol. i. p. 214):—

“Amid the thought of the fiery destruction that impended, the idea of the coolness of the well

came over my soul like balm. I rushed to its deadly brink. I threw my straining vision below. The glare from the enkindled roof illumined its inmost recesses. Yet for a wild moment did my spirit refuse to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced—it wrestled its way into my soul—it burned itself in upon my shuddering reason. O for a voice to speak! oh horror! oh, any horror but this!”

And that is all. He knows no more about the pit than you or I do. It is a pure imposture, a piece of audacious, impudent thimble-rigging; and yet, even with such bugs as these he does manage to frighten us. You will find the same artifice repeated in “Hans Pfaal,” about the mysteries of the moon; and again, though with a difference, in the abrupt conclusion of “Arthur Gordon Pym.” This imagination is a willing horse; but three times, as you see, he has killed it under him by over-riding, and come limping to the post on foot. With what a good grace does he not turn these failures to advantage, and make capital out of each imaginative bankruptcy! Even on a critical retrospect, it is hard to condemn him as he deserves; for he cheats with gusto.

After this knowledge of the stage, this cleverness at turning a story out, perhaps the most striking of Poe's peculiarities is an almost incredible insight into the debatable region between sanity and madness. The “Lup of the Perverse,” for example, is an important contribution to morbid psychology; so, perhaps, is “The Man of the Crowd;” “Berenice,” too, for as horrible as it is, touches a chord in one's own breast, though perhaps it is a chord that had better be left alone; and the same idea recurs in “The Tell-Tale Heart.” Sometimes we can go with him the whole way with a good conscience; sometimes—instead of saying, yes, this is how I should be if I were just a little more mad than ever I was—we can say frankly, this is what I am. There is one passage of analysis in the more normal vein, in the story of “Ligeia,” as to the expression of Ligeia's eyes. He tells us how he felt ever on the point of understanding their strange quality, and ever baffled at the last moment, just as “in our endeavours to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves upon the very verge of remembrance, without being able in the end to remember;” and how, in streams of running water, in the ocean, in the falling of a meteor, in the glances of unusually aged people, in certain sounds from stringed instruments, in certain passages from books, in the commonest sights and sensations of the universe, he found ever and anon some vague inexplicable analogy to the expression and the power of these loved eyes. This, at least, or the like of it, we all know. But, in the general, his subtlety was more of a snare to him than anything else. “Nil sapientiae odiosius,” he quotes himself from Seneca, “nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio.” And though it is delightful enough in the C. Auguste Dupin trilogy—it was Baudelaire who called it a trilogy—yet one wearies in the long run of this strain of ingenuity; one begins to marvel at the absence of the good homespun motives and sentiments that do the business of the everyday world; although the demonstrator is clever, and the cases in-

structive and probably unique, one begins to weary of going round this madhouse, and long for the society of some plain harmless person, with business habits and a frock coat, and nerves not much more shattered than the majority of his plain and harmless contemporaries. Nor did this exaggerated insight make him wearisome only; it did worse than that—it sometimes led him astray. Thus, in "The Pit and the Pendulum," when the hero has been condemned, "the sound of the inquisitorial voices," he says, seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of *revolution*, perhaps from its association in fancy with the lurr of a mill-wheel." Now, it wants but a moment's reflection to prove how much too clever Poe has been here, how far from true reason he has been carried by this *visionnaire* acumen. For—the man being giddy—the "idea of revolution" must have preceded the merging of the inquisitorial voices into an indeterminate hum, and most certainly could not have followed it as any fanciful deduction. Again, as before in the matter of effect, one cannot help fearing that some of the subtlety is fustian. To take an example of both sorts of imagination—the fustian and the sincere—from the same story "Arthur Gordon Pym:" the four survivors on board the brig *Arcturion* have lashed themselves to the windlass, lest they should be swept away; one of them, having drawn his lashings too tight, is ready to yield up his spirit for a long while, is nearly cut in two, indeed, by the cord about his loins. "No sooner had we removed it, however," Poe goes on, "than he spoke and seemed to experience instant relief—being able to move with much greater ease than either Parker or myself" (two who had not tied themselves so closely). "This was no doubt owing to the loss of blood." Now, whether medically correct or not, this is, on the face of it, sincerely imagined. Whether correct or not in fact, it is correct in art. Poe evidently believed it true; evidently it appeared to him that thus, and not otherwise, the thing would fall out. Now, turn a page back, and we shall find (ii. 78), in the description of the visions that went before Pym while thus bound, something to be received very much more deliberately. "I now remember," he writes,

"that in all which passed before my mind's eye, *notion* was a predominant idea. Thus I never fancied any stationary object, such as a house, a mountain, or anything of that kind; but windmills, ships, large birds, balloons, people on horse-back, carriages driving furiously, and similar moving objects presented themselves in endless succession.

This may be true; it may be the result of great erudition in the thoughts of people in such sore straits; but the imagination does not adopt these details, they do not commend themselves to our acceptance, it is nowise apparent why stationary objects should not present themselves to the fancy of a man tied to the windlass of a dismasted brig; and, this being so, the whole passage, as art, stands condemned. If it be mere careless fancy (as it seems), it is fustian of the most unpardonable sort; if it be erudition,—well then, it may be erudition, but never art. Things are fit for us so far only as they are both true and apparent. To make what I

mean clear: Mr. Ruskin, in some one or other of his delightful books, quotes and approves a poet (I think it was Homer) who said of a brave man that he was as brave as a fly; and proceeds, in his usual happy manner, to justify the epithet. The fly, he tells us, is in very deed the most madly courageous of all created beings. And therefore the simile is good—excellent good. And yet the reader's instinct would tell him, I am sure, that the simile is a vile simile. Let him prefer his instinct before Mr. Ruskin's natural history. For, though it be based on what is true, this comparison is not based upon a truth that is apparent; it does not commend itself to our acceptance; it is not art.

I have spoken at so great a length of these matters of method and detail, that no room remains to me to speak of the larger question—a question avoided also by Baudelaire on the same plea of want of space—why it is that these subjects interested Poe's imagination—a question difficult of solution, indeed, but not insoluble with time. Nor have I left myself room to speak of what is perhaps still more important, the relation between Poe and his far greater and better compatriot, Hawthorne. That there is a consanguinity, that the two saw the world in a fashion not altogether dissimilar, that some of the short stories of Hawthorne seem inspired by Poe, and some of Poe's short stories seem to be an echo of Hawthorne—all this is beyond question; but all this I can do no more than indicate.

Nor should the reader be surprised if a criticism upon Poe is mostly negative, and rather suggests new doubts than resolves those already existing; for it is Poe's merit to carry people away, and it is his besetting sin that he wants altogether such scrupulous honesty as guides and restrains the finished artist. He was, let us say it with all sorrow, not conscientious. Hunger was ever at his door, and he had too imperious a desire for what we call nowadays the sensational in literature. And thus the critic (if he be more conscientious than the man he is criticising) dare not greatly praise lest he should be thought to condone all that is unscrupulous and tinsel in these wonderful stories. They are to be praised by him in one way only—by recommending those that are least objectionable. If anyone wishes to be excited, let him read, under favourable circumstances, "The Gold Bug," "The Descent into the Maelström," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Oval Portrait," and the three stories about C. Auguste Dupin, the philosophical detective. If he should then desire to read more, he may go on, but warily: there are trap-doors and spring-guns in these two volumes, there are gins and pitfalls; and the precipitate reader may stumble unawares upon some nightmare not easily to be forgotten.

One word on the services of Mr. Ingram. This edition has evidently been a labour of love with him. Let us hope, in the next two volumes which are to complete the series, he may extend some of his love and labour to the scraps of French, which Poe was so fond of scattering about his pages. There are some deplorable errors abroad in the two under present consideration—errors

I should like to make clear to Mr. Ingram, some fine evening, over what he would call, or suffer his printers to call, a *plum of Clos de Vougeot*.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

*Antiochia; or, the Journal of a Visit to some of the Ancient Ruined Cities of Caria, Phrygia, Lycia and Pisidia.* By the Rev. E. J. Davis, H.B.M.'s Consular Chaplain, Alexandria. (London: Grant & Co., 1874.)

ASIA MINOR is one of the few countries within easy reach that have not yet passed into the domain of the ordinary tourist. While Palestine and Egypt are now annually visited by swarms of travellers of all kinds, and Mr. Cook can organise an "excursion" party for the Holy Land with as much *nonchalance* as he formerly felt in arranging one for the Rhine or Switzerland, the nearer provinces of Turkey in Asia still offer an interesting field for the more adventurous and enterprising traveller. The days are indeed past when he can hope, like Mr. Hamilton, or Sir Charles Fellows, to add materially to our geographical knowledge, or discover the sites of new and interesting cities, or to stumble unexpectedly upon such architectural remains as those of Azani, as was done by Lord Ashburnham just fifty years ago. But, with the exception of a few districts near the sea-coast, there is hardly any part of this great peninsula where an intelligent and observant traveller, who starts with a reasonable amount of information, and is content to describe things faithfully as he saw them, will not be able "to contribute something to our knowledge of a most beautiful and interesting country." These are the words in which Mr. Davis has modestly described the object which he proposed to himself, and which he has fully realised in the work before us.

At the present day, indeed, the opening of the railway from Smyrna to Aidin, affording easy access to the ruins of Ephesus and the lovely valley of the Mæander, has been the means of attracting a largely increased number of tourists to Smyrna itself, very few of whom return from thence without having taken a passing glance at the remains of the far-famed city of Diana. But few and far between are those who avail themselves of the facility thus afforded them to extend their journey farther into the interior, though the highly interesting ruins of Hierapolis and Laodicea are situated within three or four days' ride of the termination of the railroad at Aidin. These points have, however, been frequently visited as a part of "the Tour of the Seven Churches," which has been repeated at intervals, more or less frequently, ever since it was first made by Dr. Smith, the chaplain at Constantinople, as far back as the year 1671; and was fully described by Mr. Arundell in 1828. This route, therefore, had nothing to offer in the way of novelty, and Mr. Davis exercised a very wise discretion in turning his steps from the site of Colossæ towards the south-east into the comparatively little known regions of Pisidia and Lycia. No part of his route was indeed absolutely new; and the ancient sites which he visited had all been already de-









